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NARRATIVE REPORT OF WORK PROGRESS

(From October 1, 1951 to October 31, 1951)

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...it Area "B" - Diamond Heights
...development Area "C" - McLaren Park

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1. The widening of Geary Street across the Western Addition to handle present and prospective traffic loads through this section of the city;

2. The closing of other streets to through traffic to make better environment for residences and shopping, and the hospitals, churches and office buildings, medical buildings and other limited types of commercial development for which the Western Addition is especially suitable.

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NARRATIVE REPORT OF WORK PROGRESS

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1. Geographical areas in which work has been done include:

Redevelopment Area "A" - Western Addition
Redevelopment Area "B" - Diamond Heights
Proposed Redevelopment Area "C" - McLaren Park

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2. (a) Western Addition Project Area

THE PRELIMINARY PROJECT PLAN. Department of City Planning staff continued its work on the Preliminary Project Plan principally under a Work Order from the Redevelopment Agency and with the cooperation of Agency staff.

Contrasted with studies of various aspects of redevelopment proposals during September, the main task during October was one of integration: the preparation, criticism and revision of the plan itself. A comprehensive general plan for the Geary Rebuilding Area and a more detailed plan for the proposed project area were formulated on maps and a scale model. The latter were used in extended conferences among members of the two staffs and with the Agency consultants and modifications were made in the light of suggestions and criticisms evolved at these conferences.

The comprehensive intensive study of recent months has not altered but rather reinforced the concept arrived at much earlier; namely, the value of redevelopment proposals in the Western Addition is greatly enhanced by two basic changes:

1. The widening of Geary Street across the Western Addition to handle present and prospective traffic loads through this section of the city;

2. The closing of other streets to through traffic to make better environment for residences and shopping, and the hospitals, churches and office buildings, medical buildings and other limited types of commercial development for which the Western Addition is especially suitable.

During October conclusions from staff studies were checked with a number of city departments and other organizations, chiefly in respect to the above two fundamental elements of the plan:

Public Works. In extended discussions with representatives of the Department of Public Works a general concept was formulated for widening Geary Street, eliminating formerly proposed access roads and providing for one parking lane and three moving lanes each way with a divider to fan out moving lanes to four or five at signalized intersections and provide left turn bays at other crossings. Traffic-carrying capacity on this basis was computed as being sufficient for future traffic after a number of other east-west streets are closed to through traffic.

Board of Education. In two discussions with staff representatives of the Board of Education, it was agreed that the plan should include an extension of the Raphael Weill school ground, including the closing of one and a half blocks of Buchanan Street and approximately one-half block of Ellis Street to through traffic, plus approximately one acre of land now in private ownership and use. Such extension will be sufficient to accommodate the proposed all-purpose room and cafeteria addition to the school building and to bring the presently substandard playground up to minimum requirements.

Housing Authority. A conference was held with the Housing Authority staff concerning the effect of high acquisition costs on the site plans for the proposed low-rent housing developments in the Western Addition, particularly the site just west of the Jefferson Square Park. The Housing Authority staff was requested to consider the desirability of closing one block of Laguna Street and Eddy Street within the boundaries of the site in order to eliminate traffic in a high density area with a relatively high proportion of children, to increase the usable land area thus decreasing the net density per acre, and to improve pedestrian access from the Housing development to both the Jefferson Square Park and the Raphael Weill School.

Although this public housing site was selected partly because of anticipated relatively low acquisition costs in relation to other Western Addition locations, the acquisition cost is high compared to other possible locations within the City and County. Contrary to the law in other states the California Redevelopment Law does not permit the Redevelopment Agency to acquire and resell land at fair re-use value for public housing in the manner provided for other types of uses. The Federal Government, on the other hand, has established limitations on site cost in relation to total development cost for public housing. Thus, in order to absorb the entire acquisition cost and still come within Federal limitations, it is necessary on this proposed site to plan for a high ratio of dwelling units per acre.

Water Department. Discussions with Water Department staff brought out that closing a street means closing a water main in some instances and in others requires rerouting the main extending beyond the closed section. With relation to water mains,

therefore, the desirability of a street closing depends on the cost and the relation of that cost to the gains to be made by the street closing. Information was obtained as to the procedure to be followed and probable cost involved in re-routing water mains for street closings.

Other Utility Organizations. Letters were received from other utility organizations having sub-surface facilities in the area indicating at what point through-service might be cut. Generally, it appears possible to continue service in easements if a street is closed to traffic but is not built upon. The narrow alley-type streets and certain other streets, however, can be closed and built upon.

The plans that have been developed for the Rebuilding Area anticipate prompt development along both sides of Geary Street and between Geary Street and Jefferson Square. They also accommodate the proposed Community Center in the blocks south of Geary Street adjacent to Girl's High School and the two public housing sites approved by the Board of Supervisors for the Western Addition. There remain two sections within the Rebuilding Area which are blighted but in parts of which a large number of buildings are sound or sufficiently so to lend themselves to rehabilitation. These areas would benefit by exercise of re-development procedures but are not being proposed now as redevelopment project areas for two reasons. (1) There may not be a market in the next few years for many new and rebuilt buildings in these sections, as well as in the sections being proposed for immediate designation as a project area. (2) It is doubtful that there is enough Federal capital grant money to finance redevelopment in these additional sections.

Point (2) is based on studies conducted by Redevelopment Agency staff. Point (1) follows from market studies jointly undertaken, including participation in the following conferences:

A prominent San Francisco builder examined the site plan and building types considered for the project, indicating that his experience suggested a limited number of tower buildings, together with two-story walk ups but not too many three-story walk ups. He also indicated that tax costs and cost of maintenance of open space were major problems.

An owner of a number of hotels was interviewed by one of the Agency's consultants. The Geary Street area near Van Ness Avenue appeared to him as a likely location for a residential type of hotel.

Discussion with several doctors indicated that there is a need for a central auditorium, suites of offices for the medical and dental associations and for other medical facilities not in association with any one hospital, as well as a need for medical offices near most hospitals.

The manager of the DeSabla apartments in San Mateo was interviewed and a large area of new rental housing in San Mateo was studied.

Staff also took part in the Governor's Conference on the Problems of the Ageing and was reinforced in the view that building types should include combinations of larger units with one or two small flats with access to yard or balcony -- the latter types suitable for old or young bachelors or couples.

Based on recent discussions among City Planning and Agency staff and with bankers and builders, emphasis has been placed in the plan on opportunities for small investors to build two to six-unit buildings. Such developments tend, however, to cut open space into small areas which are not as usable as large ones. Also, they tend to be wasteful of land in the sense that more is used for driveways and less efficient parking. However, where associations of property owners have maintained garage compounds and open space, the advantages of large-scale investment have been achieved. For this reason staff members met with the manager of St. Francis Homes Association and discussed how such associations operate.

From the St. Francis Wood experience, it appears owner occupancy has been an important factor in the success of the Association. Further attention will be given to the question of whether such joint activity of owners would be successful in an investor-occupied development.

TENTATIVE PROJECT PLAN. The Agency revised the Departmental Work Order issued to the City Real Estate Department last April to include the making of estimates of re-use values as well as acquisition costs. Agency staff conferred on numerous occasions both in the office and in the field with a representative of the Real Estate Department in order to familiarize him with the plans for the area and the proposed building controls.

Agency staff conferred with the executive secretary of the local Japanese Chamber of Commerce and the president of the local Japanese Citizens League regarding the proposed boundaries of the project area. It was pointed out that the widening of Geary Street will leave a 60-foot strip fronting on Geary Street and adjacent to a substantial number of Japanese places of business. From time to time interest has been expressed in developing a Japanese Center, particularly as a tourist attraction; and it was suggested that the merchants handling Japanese goods might wish to develop their own plans to acquire and develop this additional land on the Geary Street frontage. As a result of these conferences, the Japanese-American Citizens League is planning a meeting for mid-November to afford Japanese merchants and citizens the opportunity to hear further of the Agency's plans and to discuss their possible participation in them.

Agency staff conferred with a representative of the United States Department of Commerce and the manager of a local YWCA residence club concerning possible types of accommocations for single persons to be included in the project area. It is apparent that there is a large market for single persons' accommodations if rents are not too high, and special design may assist in achieving lower rents. It is felt that the provision of new accommodations for single people will assist eventually in raising housing standards for the many single people to

be displaced by the project because new quarters for those who can afford them will create vacancies for lower income singles which are better than those now available to them.

Agency staff conferred with a number of architects, doctors, bankers, builders and public officials regarding the project plan and particularly the market and financing for various types of dwellings, construction costs and rents. Also discussed with several architects were the problems of obtaining good building design and combining usable open space with diversity of ownership.

RELOCATION PLANS. Agency staff explored the problems of management and maintenance of acquired property with representatives of the City Real Estate Department and the Housing Authority. When property is acquired for the City, other city departments, such as the Department of Public Works, are used for maintenance; the Housing Authority handles its own. A Housing Authority representative also stressed the importance of communication with site residents to avoid disconcerting rumors and secure their cooperation in relocation.

Agency staff made further analysis of the extent to which the creation of new housing in one area, for example, in Diamond Heights, creates vacancies in other areas which may assist in rehousing displaced families from the Western Addition. In the survey conducted for the Agency by the Western Research Institute of a sample of families who moved into new housing in San Francisco in 1950, interviewers obtained the families' previous addresses and limited other data. An analysis of this data indicated the following:

> The construction of new single-family houses and various types of apartments primarily in the southwest sections of the city made available vacancies in many sections of the city. For example, construction of new single-family houses located in only 13 census tracts resulted in vacancies in 50 tracts.
>
> (a) Many of the vacancies are created within the areas in which vacancies customarily are available to families of minority races.
>
> (b) Vacancies caused by the construction of single-family houses for sale were primarily in dwelling units for rent.

No analysis was made of vacancies created outside the City and County by new construction in the City and County, although such vacancies also are important. Previous studies have shown that many families who move out of the Western Addition also move out of the City and County.

It is intended that further analysis of this subject will be made because of its importance relative to the Western Addition site occupants whose incomes are insufficient for new private construction but in excess of eligibility limits for low-cost public housing.

As a result of inquiry from a representative of the Housing Authority relating to a new reporting requirement of the Public Housing Administration concerning families from redevelopment project sites, Agency staff made a review

of Public Housing Administration policy and procedures as to the statutory preferences to be given in low-rent housing for families to be displaced from slum clearance sites. It appears that all implications of the present policy and procedure are not clear and further inquiry is to be made, particularly concerning the time at which preferences become applicable.

Agency staff conferred with various representatives in several capacities with the Housing Authority relative to the Authority's experience with site occupants of acquired property, current occupancy and turnover statistics in low rent developments and scheduled on anticipated dates of completion of future low-rent developments.

Agency staff arranged a meeting with representatives of Negro, Japanese and Filipino newspapers circulating in San Francisco. Agency plans for Diamond Heights and Western Addition were discussed and the newspaper representatives asked for material which they might publish. The first of a series of proposed informational articles was given to the press representatives at the close of the meeting.

Agency staff continued individual discussions with a wide number of recognized leaders in the Western Addition community.

OTHER ACTION. Following a conference by Agency staff with staff representatives of the Recreation and Park Commission, the Agency withdrew its request of a year ago that proposed surface improvements of the Margaret S. Hayward Playground adjacent to the Jefferson Square Park be postponed. The Recreation and Park Commission indicated its intention to proceed at once to develop several softball fields on the playground and make certain other minor improvements.

2. (b) Diamond Heights Area

At the end of the month the City Real Estate Department under a Departmental Work Order from the Agency delivered estimates of re-use value for land in the project area. Agency staff began completion of the financial analysis of public expense and income in connection with the project for the required report on the Tentative Project Plan.

During the month Agency staff completed a financial analysis for the private financing of a typical development for a portion of the project, stated in terms of a number of alternates based on definite assumptions as to taxes and financing costs. The analysis was reviewed with representatives of the Federal Housing Administration, the Assessor's office and one of the Agency's architectural consultants. A Federal Housing Administration representative began preparation of an analysis for each of several proposed rental building types, utilizing cost data based on the recent experience with developments under FHA insured mortgages.

The required report on the Tentative Project Plan, completed except for financial analysis, was reviewed in detail by the Agency's Counsel.

The Agency's Counsel prepared a notice of the Agency's public hearing re Diamond Heights, which notice was approved for publication by the Agency, the date of the hearing to be inserted when decided upon.

PUBLIC INFORMATION. The Tentative Project Plan was featured in a Planning Exhibit at the Annual Fine Arts Festival which was held from October 16 to 21. The topographical model and illustrative material which was shown at the American Institute of Architects' Exhibit at Macy's during July were exhibited. An estimated 175,000 persons attended the Festival and local newspaper reviewers praised the Planning Exhibit, describing it as "one of the finest and most worthwhile" in the Festival.

2. (c) McLaren-Candlestick Area

By letter the General Manager of the Recreation and Park Department expressed the belief that all of McLaren Park should be included within the proposed redevelopment area. Reasons given were that further study should be given to the possibility of developing as part of the Park a playground on the roof of an existing reservoir and to correcting maladjustments between the Park and private residential development along the western Park boundary.

Following the receipt of this communication, Agency staff reviewed by field inspection the desirability of recommending a wider boundary than the one proposed in the Department of City Planning's report entitled Redevelopment in the John McLaren Park Area, July, 1951.

2. (d) Activities Applicable to all the Areas

The Agency Director, both in writing and in person, presented to the Redevelopment Committee of the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association a number of subjects for the Committee's investigation to facilitate a more rapid rate of private building in redevelopment projects. It was suggested that the Association become the medium for rallying civic-minded persons, particularly those connected with the construction industry, to overcome various obstacles which may detour in greater or lesser degree the participation of private builders in redevelopment projects.

The Agency Director conferred with a field representative of the Housing and Home Finance Agency and the Director of the Sacramento Redevelopment Agency re proposed subjects for discussion at a redevelopment conference in Sacramento on November 2 with Nathaniel S. Keith, Director of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment for the Housing and Home Finance Agency.

Agency staff spoke before a number of civic organizations at their request for information about the redevelopment program.

2. (e) Degree of Completion

With the re-use estimates completed for Diamond Heights, it is expected that the report on the tentative redevelopment plan can be printed in November, and the public hearing before the Agency held in December.

The Department of City Planning requested and was granted an extension to November 30, 1951, of the Agency's Departmental Work Order for completion of the preliminary redevelopment plan for the Western Addition.

James E. Lash
Director